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I, Gabriel Ottoson-Deal, hereby submit this work as part of the requirements for the degree of:
Master of Music
in:
Composition
It is entitled:
Angelitos de papel
for string quartet

This work and its defense approved by:

Chair:

[Signatures]
Angelitos de papel
for string quartet

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by

Gabriel R. Ottoson-Deal

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Committee Chair: Dr. Michael Fiday

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Abstract

Angelitos de papel is a study in the relationship between composition, notation, and performance. Each of its three movements proposes a different relationship between these three aspects of a musical work. In the first movement, the composition includes strict control of the turning of pages, which is normally left up to the performers. This draws attention to the (normally extraneous) sound of paper rustling, and creates a dramatic tension between the performers and the paper parts as the accelerating page turns become increasingly frantic. In the second movement, graphic notation gives specific instructions to the performers, and they are asked to do things (playing the paper parts instead of their instruments, and various theatrical actions) that are outside the standard performance practice of the string quartet. However, they have quite a bit of freedom to determine timing, for example choosing how long repeated patterns should continue. The theatrical incursions into this movement dramatize a range of responses to the paper itself, from fascination with the sounds it makes to frustration and even violence.

In the third movement, verbal instructions leave the performers great freedom, the composer’s role being to lay out a situation and framework for the performers’ spontaneous improvisation rather than to control the details of the performance. The return to the use of the parts as notation (rather than as instruments) occurs in a bemused atmosphere; and the function of the notation is transformed, as is the resulting music, by the gamelike situation set up by the verbal instructions for this movement. The section of free improvisation near the end allows the performers to transcend the limits of the notation (both the conventional notation of the parts and the verbal instructions) for a short time. Nonetheless, even in the free improvisation, the musical materials are limited to those provided by the composer; and the Epilogue, though played from memory in performance, is composed and notated just as strictly (and conventionally) as the opening of the piece, even though the exact route the performers take to reach it is left up to them to find.
Performance Notes

Materials: Score, 4 practice parts, 4 performance parts. (The practice parts are intended to facilitate learning the notes of the first movement, without the additional complication of the page turns found in the performance parts. They also include the graphic notation for the second movement and instructions for the third, which are not found in the performance parts.)

There should be no breaks between the movements. The total duration is dependent on the performer's choices in the aleatoric and improvisatory sections, but should range about 15'-25'.

I. music paper (Duration: 6'-7')

VS in the score and practice parts indicates a page turn in the performance part. These page turns are a composed part of the piece and should be studied and practiced like every other aspect of the music. They should be clearly audible; subtle amplification may be used to assist this. At first, where there is plenty of time for each page turn, they should be timed to occur where marked in the score (e.g. the page turn in the cello at m. 45 should occur at the end of that measure, overlapping the end of the viola's 16th-note run), though they should not be too rhythmic or artificial. Later, from the unison page turn at m. 81 on, the amount of time allowed for each page turn becomes progressively shorter, and the turns should simply be made as quickly as possible. From m. 102 on, the page turns begin to approach impossibility, and the music will eventually fall apart under the burden; try to resist this, but ultimately allow it to happen. After m. 129 there is no more notated music in the performance parts, marking the beginning of the second movement, whose graphic notation follows in the score and practice parts.

II. paper music (Duration: ca. 5'-10')

Ideally, the second and third movements should be performed from memory; they are not included in the performance parts since they include instructions for manipulating the parts themselves. The element of theater in the second movement requires particular attention. For much of this movement the timing is unspecified; the notation is roughly spatial, but the relationship between horizontal distance and time varies depending on the needs of space and visual clarity. The performers should take increasing freedom in the timing of events as the piece progresses.

III. angelitos (Duration: ca. 5'-10')

The third movement is an improvisation based on the notated music of the first movement. Instructions, and sample fragments for the improvisation, are found in the score and practice parts. The sample fragments are intended as suggestions, and the improvisation should not be based solely on them. At the end of the improvisation, the Epilogue should be played from memory to close the performance.
Angelitos de papel
I. music paper

Motionless \( \frac{\text{d} = 60}{\text{GP}} \)

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

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Angelitos de papel

27 acc. poco a poco, sempre!

Vn I

Vn II

Va

Vc

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### II. Paper Music

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Violin I</th>
<th>Slow down page turns, and stop on reaching the end of the book.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violin II</td>
<td>Turn pages rapidly!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viola</td>
<td>Shift instrument to bow to LH, and turn pages faster-on reaching the end of the book, snatch it up by its binding as if to throw it away violently, but freeze!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cello</td>
<td>Slow down page turns extremely, and pause with the last page in hand... slowly turn last page...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Vn I | Slowly and quietly put down instrument; watch cellist. Turn to stare at violist. |
| Vn II | (_shake part vigorously!) M M M (pause) |
| Va | Without letting go of the page, look at it, then slowly turn it back... |
| Vc | Turn the page slowly back and forth, listening enthralled to the sound it makes _ poco cresc. it starts at violist. |

| Vn I | In unison, pick up parts from stand. Roll tightly, with open end facing out up held in place by fingers. Lift parts in RH. (_shake into palm of LH!) _ x (pause) _ x (pause) |
| Vn II | (_shake into palm of LH!) _ x (pause) _ x (pause) |
| Va | _ x (pause) _ x (pause) |
| Vc | Quickly _ quietly put down instrument, and then roll up part (same as violins) _ lift part in RH. (_shake into palm of LH!) _ x (pause) _ x (pause) |

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Angélicos de papel

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\[ (f=60) \text{ poco a poco accel.} \to (f=162) \]

\begin{align*}
Vn I & \quad \text{(steady tempo \( f=162 \))} \\
Vn II & \quad \text{all stop together!} \\
Vn & \quad \text{resume pattern as before, but hitting parts on knees rather than LH (edited)} \\
Vn & \quad \text{(pause)} \\
Vn & \quad \text{join in, hitting on odd beats: \( \neq \) etc. ad lib...} \\
Vn & \quad \text{after one or two repetitions of the pattern, each player either speed up or slow down, not together!} \\
Vn & \quad \text{(pattern falls apart) \quad (pause)} \\
Vn & \quad \text{after 1 or 2 repetitions, begin adding extra hits to the pattern by hitting on two beats in a row, something like this:} \\
Vn & \quad \text{resume pattern, steady again, again hitting LH} \\
Vn & \quad \text{then, begin to hit on all three beats, so that eventually everyone hits on every beat:} \\
Vn & \quad \text{stop! (all together) + remain motionless parts held in both hands, horizontal, above heads} \\
Vn & \quad \text{Violin II: let part unroll, with pages brushing across fingertips:} \\
Vn & \quad \text{unroll part} \\
Vn & \quad \text{unroll part}
\end{align*}
Angelitos de papel

\[ \begin{array}{|c|}
\hline
Vn I & \text{continue indifferently} & \text{trail off, step} \\
\hline
Vn II & \text{continue, attempting to ignore viola but becoming distracted... trail off, step} \\
\hline
V_{3} & \text{stare wildly around, pick up part, throw it again, and again, and again, and drop it again} & \text{mp} \\
\hline
Vc & \text{continue indifferently} & \text{trail off, step} \\
\hline
\end{array} \]

\[ \begin{array}{|c|}
\hline
V_{n} I & \text{silence} & \text{rub 2 pages together} \\
\hline
V_{n} II & \text{slowly pick up part, hold, look at it!} & \text{rub 2 pages together} \\
\hline
V_{3} & \text{-} & \text{-} \\
\hline
Vc & \text{-} & \text{-} \\
\hline
\end{array} \]

\[ \begin{array}{|c|}
\hline
V_{n} I & \text{ad lib: choose a short fragment of the printed music—} \\
& \text{while staring at it on the page, put part on stand, pick up instrument, play the chosen fragment} \\
\hline
V_{n} II & \text{stop—} & \text{put part on stand, begin to look through it,}
& \text{turning pages slowly & thoughtfully} \\
\hline
V_{3} & \text{stop—} & \text{look at part...} \\
\hline
Vc & \text{stop—} & \text{look at part...} \\
\hline
\end{array} \]
Continue turning slowly and thoughtfully through the pages of the parts: look intently at the pages, as though rediscovering the music printed on them. One by one, pick up your instruments, still intent on the parts. Then take turns choosing short fragments of the printed music to play (from 1-2 notes to 1-2 measures). For the most part, choose fragments from different pages each time, and avoid choosing fragments in the order in which they appear in the printed music.

At first, let each fragment appear in isolation, surrounded by near silence; play and listen to the fragments thoughtfully. Then (after a minute or so), begin choosing fragments that respond to one another somehow. Gradually reduce the amount of time between them (this means you will have less time to choose the next fragment) so that the fragments chosen by the quartet begin to assemble into a continuous string.

Eventually (after another minute or so), start to overlap fragments, and begin to build up a polyphonic group improvisation made out of these fragments of the first movement. As the pace accelerates and the texture becomes denser, you should find yourself turning pages faster and faster between fragments. When this would begin to hamper the improvisation, stop choosing fragments from the printed music and improvise freely, no longer looking at the parts but still using the musical materials of the first movement (for suggestions see the sample fragments and patterns on the next page).

The improvisation should remain contemplative in mood, though increasing in intensity. Over the course of about three to five minutes, build to a climax; then let the music slowly dissipate. Close by playing the Epilogue from memory.
sample patterns

1. sustained harmonics (slow)

2. undulating semitones (gradual accel.)

3. fugato subject (fugato at the minor ninth)...

...and its inversion

4. syncopated, accented sustained notes (hocket-like texture) pitches:

5. fast 16th notes in additive rhythm

etc.